

For this I shall be ever ready to make great sacrifices, and let me therefore hope that when I next offer my volumes to your examination, like the Sibylline Books, their inspiration may at length be recognised.

I am, Sir,
Your obedient servant,
B.
DISRAELI.¹

The novel which was thus thought unworthy of presentation by the publisher of Byron is a picture at once flashy and conventional of a society of which Disraeli had little direct knowledge when he wrote. ' *The Young Duke!*' exclaimed his father, according to a family tradition, when he first heard of the book. 'What does Ben know of dukes?'² The Duke of St. James himself is not wholly uninteresting, for he possesses certain qualities which appear again and again in the heroes of Disraeli's novels, and appear because they are reflected from the author's own personality. 'He was a sublime coxcomb, one of those rare characters whose finished manner and shrewd sense combined prevent their conceit from being contemptible.' But his career of dissipation and prodigality soon grows wearisome, and, that in some degree through the unskilfulness of the author. In the well-known gambling scene at Brighton he writes with genuine power; but too often where he endeavours to produce an effect he falls into more extravagance. The figure of May Dacre, however, partially redeems the book, even as she redeemed the hero. She is one of the most charming of Disraeli's women, a forerunner of Sybil, and like Sybil, it is worthy of note, an adherent of 'the old faith.' The Young Duke finally wins her heart by a

¹ Smiles, II., pp. 332-334.

² An attempt indeed has been made to show that Disraeli had shared the life of the young bucks whose dissipations he professes to describe; but there is no real evidence to support the theory, and his own testimony is decisive against it. 'Until my return from the East on the eve of the '32 election,' he once said to Lord Rowton, 'I had lived a very secluded life, and mixed not at all "with the world.'